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Sir:

Transmitted herewith for filing under 37 C.F.R. §1.53(b) is the patent application of:
Inventor(s): Mitsuo SAEKI, Masafumi OKUMURA, Shigeo TANAKA and Hidekiyo OZAWA
For: PROTECTION METHOD, CONTROL CIRCUIT, AND BATTERY UNIT

- ☒ Specification (41 pages)
- ☒ 12 sheets of drawings
- ☒ Declaration and Power of Attorney
 - ☒ Newly executed
- ☒ Return Receipt Postcard (2)
- ☒ An assignment of the invention to FUJITSU LIMITED with PTO-1595
- ☒ A certified copy of Japanese Patent Application No. 11-074479
- ☒ An Information Disclosure Statement with PTO-1449 and 4 references
- ☒ Notification of Change of Name and Address
- ☒ A filing fee, calculated as shown below:

		(Col. 1)	(Col. 2)	Small Entity		Other Than A Small Entity	
FOR:		No. Filed	No. Extra	RATE	FEE	RATE	FEE
BASIC FEE					\$345		\$690
TOTAL CLAIMS	36 - 20 =		* 16	× 9 =		× 18 =	288
INDEP CLAIMS	6 - 3 =		* 3	× 39 =		× 78 =	234
MULTIPLE DEPENDENT CLAIM PRESENTED				+130 =		+260 =	0
				TOTAL			1,212

* If the difference in Col. 1 is less than zero, enter "0" in Col. 2

Check No. 00592 in the amount of \$1,252.00 is enclosed to cover the filing fee and assignment recordation. The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge payment for any additional filing fees associated with this communication or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 01-2300.

Respectfully submitted,

ARENT FOX KINTNER PLOTKIN & KAHN, PLLC

Charles M. Marmelstein
Reg. No. 25,895

1050 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Suite 600
Washington, D.C. 20036-5339
Tel: (202) 857-6008
CMM:lmd

Enclosures: Specification (41 pages), Drawings (12), Declaration, Return Receipt Postcard, Assignment, Priority Document (1), Information Disclosure Statement, Notification of Change of Name and Address, Check No. 00592

62-102225-3

SPECIFICATION

TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

BE IT KNOWN THAT WE, Mitsuo Saeki, a citizen of Japan residing at Kawasaki-shi, Kanagawa, Japan, Masafumi Okumura, a citizen of Japan residing at Kawasaki-shi, Kanagawa, Japan, Shigeo Tanaka, a citizen of Japan residing at Kawasaki-shi, Kanagawa, Japan and Hidekiyo Ozawa, a citizen of Japan residing at Kawasaki-shi, Kanagawa, Japan have invented certain new and useful improvements in

PROTECTION METHOD, CONTROL CIRCUIT, AND BATTERY UNIT

of which the following is a specification : -

TITLE OF THE INVENTION

PROTECTION METHOD, CONTROL CIRCUIT, AND
BATTERY UNIT

5 BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention generally relates to a protection method, a control circuit, and a battery unit. More particularly, the present
10 invention relates to a protection method for preventing batteries from over-discharging and being overcharged, and a control circuit and a battery unit both employed in said protection method.

In recent years, lithium ion (Li+)

15 batteries have been replacing nickel-cadmium (NiCd) batteries and nickel-metal-hydrogen (NiMH) batteries in portable electronic devices such as notebook-type personal computers. Compared with the NiCd batteries and NiMH batteries, the Li+ batteries are
20 lighter but have a larger capacity per unit volume. For this reason, the Li+ batteries are suitable for a device which is preferably light and required to endure continuous use for a long time.

In an over-discharged state, however, the
25 Li+ batteries deteriorate rapidly. Therefore, the Li+ batteries need to be prevented from over-discharging.

2. Description of the Related Art

A battery unit used in a portable
30 electronic device has a plurality of battery cells connected in series. The maximum number of battery cells connected in series in one battery unit is determined by the relationship between the output voltage of the battery unit and a power source
35 voltage supplied from outside at the time of charging. For instance, the output voltage of one NiCd battery cell or one NiMH battery cell is 1.2 V,

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and the power source voltage supplied at the time of charging is approximately 1.7 V. Since a 16-V output voltage of a battery unit is the most suitable for a general purpose electronic device, the maximum number of NiCd or NiMH battery cells connected in series in the battery unit is 9. On the other hand, the highest possible output voltage of one Li+ battery cell is approximately 4.2 V. Accordingly, the maximum number of Li+ battery cells connected in series in one battery unit is 3.

Unlike a NiCd battery unit and a NiMH battery unit, the Li+ battery unit has a function to protect against short-circuiting inside and outside the Li+ battery unit. This prevents the Li+ battery unit from deteriorating and shortening its life. For instance, if short-circuiting occurs inside or outside the Li+ battery unit, a fuse cuts off an over-discharging current or overcharging current when the discharging current or charging current becomes larger than a predetermined current value. Thus, the Li+ battery unit is prevented from deteriorating and shortening its life.

FIG. 1 is a block diagram of an example battery unit of the prior art, and FIG. 2 is a circuit diagram of a voltage monitor circuit of the example battery unit of the prior art.

In FIGS. 1 and 2, a battery unit 100 comprises battery cells E1, E2, and E3 connected as shown in the figures, a voltage monitor circuit 101, a fuse 102, p-channel FETs 103 and 104, and power supply terminals 105 and 106.

The battery cells E1, E2, and E3 are connected in series. The FET 103 is a charge control FET which functions as a charge control switch. The FET 104 is a discharge control FET which functions as a discharge control switch. The voltage monitor circuit 101 monitors the voltages of

the battery cells E1, E2, and E3. In accordance with the respective voltages of the battery cells E1, E2, and E3, the voltage monitor circuit 101 switches on and off the FETs 103 and 104.

- 5 As shown in FIG. 2, the voltage monitor circuit 101 comprises an overcharge monitor circuit 101a and an over-discharge monitor circuit 101b. The overcharge monitor circuit 101a monitors whether the battery cells E1, E2, and E3 are in an
- 10 overcharged state, and switches off the FET 103 when the battery cells are in an overcharged state. The over-discharge monitor circuit 101b monitors whether the battery cells E1, E2, and E3 are in an over-
- 15 discharged state, and switches off the FET 104 when the battery cells E1, E2, and E3 are in an over-discharged state.

 The overcharge monitor circuit 101a comprises comparators 121, 122, and 123, reference power sources e1a, e1b, and e1c, and an OR gate 124.

- 20 The comparator 121 compares the voltage of the battery cell E1 with a reference voltage Vref1 generated by the reference power source e1a. If the voltage of the battery cell E1 is higher than the reference voltage Vref1, the comparator 121 outputs
- 25 "1". If the voltage of the battery cell E1 is lower than the reference voltage Vref1, the comparator 121 outputs "0". Here, "1" indicates that the output of a comparator is at the high logic level, and "0" indicates that the output of a comparator is at the
- 30 low logic level. The comparator 122 compares the voltage of the battery cell E2 with a reference voltage Vref1 generated by the reference power source e1b. If the voltage of the battery cell E2 is higher than the reference voltage Vref1, the
- 35 comparator 122 outputs "1". If the voltage of the battery cell E2 is lower than the reference voltage Vref1, the comparator 122 outputs "0". The

comparator 123 compares the voltage of the battery cell E3 with a reference voltage Vref1 generated by the reference power source etc. If the voltage of the battery cell E3 is higher than the reference voltage Vref1, the comparator 123 outputs "1". If the voltage of the battery cell E3 is lower than the reference voltage Vref1, the comparator outputs "0".

The outputs of the comparators 121, 122, and 123 are supplied to the OR gate 124. The OR gate 124 performs an OR operation on the outputs of the comparators 121, 122, and 123, and supplies a result of the OR operation to the gate of the FET 103. If any of the outputs of the comparators 121, 122, and 123 is "1", i.e., if any of the battery cells E1, E2, and E3 is in an overcharged state and the signal supplied from the OR gate 124 to the gate of the FET 103 is "1", the FET 103 is switched off so as to prevent overcharge.

The over-discharge monitor circuit 101b comprises comparators 111, 112, and 113, reference power sources e2a, e2b, and e2c, and an OR gate 114.

The comparator 111 compares the voltage of the battery cell E1 with a reference voltage Vref2 generated by the reference power source e2a. If the voltage of the battery cell E1 is higher than the reference voltage Vref2, the comparator 111 outputs "0". If the voltage of the battery cell E1 is lower than the reference voltage Vref2, the comparator 111 outputs "1". The comparator 112 compares the voltage of the battery cell E2 with a reference voltage Vref2 generated by the reference power source e2b. If the voltage of the battery cell E2 is higher than the reference voltage Vref2, the comparator 112 outputs "0". If the voltage of the battery cell E2 is lower than the reference voltage Vref2, the comparator 112 outputs "1". The comparator 113 compares the voltage of the battery

cell E3 with a reference voltage Vref2 generated by the reference power source e2c. If the voltage of the battery cell E3 is higher than the reference voltage Vref2, the comparator 113 outputs "0". If
5 the voltage of the battery cell E3 is lower than the reference voltage Vref2, the comparator 113 outputs "1".

The outputs of the comparators 111, 112, and 113 are supplied to the OR gate 114. The OR
10 gate 114 performs an OR operation on the outputs of the comparators 111, 112, and 113, and supplies a result of the OR operation to the gate of the FET 104. If any of the outputs of the comparators 111, 112, and 113 is "1", i.e., if any of the battery
15 cells E1, E2, and E3 is in an over-discharged state and the signal supplied from the OR gate 114 to the gate of the FET 104 is "1", the FET 104 is switched off so as to prevent over-discharge.

When a current larger than a certain
20 current value flows, the fuse 102 fuses and cuts off the current. By doing so, the fuse 102 serves as a part of a double protection circuit in a case where the voltage monitor circuit 100 does not properly cut off the large current or the FETs 103 and 104 do
25 not properly function to cut off the large current due to some trouble such as short-circuiting.

The power supply terminals 105 and 106 are connected to an electronic device 130, as shown in FIG. 1. The electronic device 130 comprises a power
30 source circuit 131 and a device main body 132. The power source circuit 131 converts a d.c. voltage supplied from the battery unit 100 to a d.c. voltage to be used in the device main body 132.

At the time of shipping, the battery unit
35 100 is connected to the electronic device 130. The battery unit 100 may be fixed to the electronic device 130 with screws. If the battery unit 100 and

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the electronic device 130 are packed separately in such a case, the package becomes large, and a large amount of cushioning material is required.

Moreover, after unpacking, the user has to take the
5 trouble to screw the battery unit 100 to the electronic device 130.

In a case of an electronic device having built-in dry batteries, an insulating sheet is inserted between the dry batteries and the
10 electrodes of the electronic device. The user normally removes the insulating sheet when he/she starts using the electronic device. By removing the insulating sheet, the dry batteries and the electronic device are connected, and electric power
15 is supplied from the dry batteries to the electronic device. Compared with the dry batteries, however, the battery unit 100 has more connection pins for connection with the electronic device 130. Also, the connection connector of the battery unit 100 has
20 a more complicated structure. For these reasons, an insulating sheet cannot be inserted between the battery unit 100 and the electronic device 130, and, at the time of shipping, the battery unit 100 is already mounted on the electronic device 130, as
25 shown in FIG. 1.

The battery unit 100 shown in FIG. 1 remains connected to the power source circuit 131 even when the power switch of the electronic device 130 is turned off. The power source circuit 131 is
30 formed by a DC-DC converter, and consumes electric current even when the output is cut off. The voltage monitor circuit 101 of the battery unit 100 also constantly consumes a small amount of electric current. Because of this, after the shipping of the
35 electronic device 130, the battery cells E1, E2, and E3 of the battery unit 100 are consumed. If the battery unit 100 is in an over-discharged state due

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to the consumption of the battery cells E1, E2, and E3, the FET 104 is switched off, and the battery cells E1, E2, and E3 are disconnected from the electronic device 130. If the electronic device 130 is left unpacked for an even longer period of time, the battery cells E1, E2, and E3 might over-discharge due to current consumed by the voltage monitor circuit 101.

10 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A general object of the present invention is to provide a protection method, a control circuit, and a battery unit, in which the above disadvantages are eliminated.

15 A more specific object of the present invention is to provide a protection method in which built-in battery cells never over-discharge even if connected to an electronic device for a long period of time, thereby preventing the battery unit from deteriorating and shortening the life thereof.

20 The above objects of the present inventions are achieved by a protection method of protecting battery cells from over-discharging. This method comprises the steps of: monitoring the voltage of each of the battery cells; controlling a discharge control switch connected between a load and the battery cells in accordance with the voltage of each of the battery cells; and maintaining the discharge control switch in a forced OFF state in accordance with a forced off signal supplied from outside. In this method, the discharge control switch is released from the forced OFF state in accordance with a release signal supplied from outside. The discharge control switch is also released from the forced OFF state when the battery cells are being charged. The discharge control switch is also released from the forced OFF state

when any of the battery cells is in an overcharged state. The discharge control switch is also released from the forced OFF state when the voltage of any of the battery cells reaches a predetermined voltage value.

With the above constitution, by maintaining the switch in the forced OFF state in accordance with the forced OFF signal supplied from outside, the battery cells can be prevented from over-discharging even when the battery cells go uncharged over a long period of time. Thus, the battery cells can be prevented from deterioration.

In the case where the discharge control switch is released from the forced OFF state in accordance with a release signal supplied from outside, a normal charge and discharge control operation can be performed.

In the case where the discharge control switch is released from the forced OFF state when the battery cells are charged, the forced OFF state can be automatically cancelled when the user starts using the electronic device.

In the case where the discharge control switch is released from the forced OFF state when the battery cells are in an overcharged state, the discharge control switch does not restrict discharging in an overcharged state, thereby protecting the battery cells.

In the case where the discharge control switch is also released from the forced OFF state when the voltage of any of the battery cells reaches a predetermined voltage value, the forced OFF state can be automatically cancelled before the battery cells are overcharged.

The above and other objects and features of the present invention will become more apparent from the following description taken in conjunction

with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a block diagram of an example
5 battery unit of the prior art;

FIG. 2 is a block diagram of a voltage
monitor circuit of an example battery unit of the
prior art;

FIG. 3 is a block diagram of a first
10 embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 4 is a block diagram of a voltage
monitor circuit of the first embodiment of the
present invention;

FIGS. 5A to 5E illustrates an operation of
15 a discharge control circuit of the first embodiment
of the present invention;

FIG. 6 is a block diagram of a first
modification of the first embodiment of the present
invention;

FIG. 7 is a block diagram of a second
20 modification of the first embodiment of the present
invention;

FIG. 8 is a block diagram of a battery
unit of a second embodiment of the present
25 invention;

FIG. 9 is a block diagram of a battery
unit of a third embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 10 is a block diagram of a battery
unit of a fourth embodiment of the present
30 invention;

FIG. 11 is an external perspective view of
a battery unit of the present invention;

FIG. 12 is a perspective view of the
battery unit of FIG. 11 without a cover; and

35 FIG. 13 is a perspective view of the
battery unit of FIG. 11 without a substrate.

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DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The following is a description of embodiments of the present invention, with reference to the accompanying drawings.

5 FIG. 3 is a block diagram of a first embodiment of the present invention. In this figure, the same components as in FIG. 1 are indicated by the same reference numerals.

 A battery unit 1 of this embodiment has a
10 discharge control circuit 2 between a voltage monitor circuit 101 and a discharge control FET 104.

 The discharge control circuit 2 is connected to a set terminal 3, a reset terminal 4, and an over-discharge control circuit 101b (shown in
15 FIG. 2) of the voltage monitor circuit 101. The discharge control circuit 2 holds a discharge control signal at "1" when the set terminal 3 is set at "1", so as to turn off the discharge control FET 104 regardless of a discharge control signal
20 outputted from the over-discharge control circuit 101b. When the reset terminal 4 is set at "1", the discharge control signal outputted from the over-discharge control signal is supplied to the discharge control FET 104.

25 A FET 103 shown in FIGS. 3 to 10 is a charge control FET which functions as a charge control switch. The discharge control FET 104 shown in FIGS. 3 to 10 functions as a discharge control switch. These FETs are p-channel FETs, which are ON
30 when the potential at the gate side is at the low level.

 FIG. 4 is a circuit diagram of the discharge control circuit of the first embodiment of the present invention.

35 The discharge control circuit 2 comprises a flip-flop (FF) 5, OR gates 6 and 7, and a comparator 8.

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The flip-flop 5 has a set terminal and a reset terminal. The output of the flip-flop 5 is set at "1" when its set terminal is set at "1". The output of the flip-flop 5 is reset at "0" when its reset terminal is set at "1". The set terminal 3 is connected to the set terminal of the flip-flop 5, and the output of the OR gate 6 is supplied to the reset terminal of the flip-flop 5.

The OR gate 6 is supplied with a reset signal applied to the reset terminal 4 and the output of the comparator 8 so as to perform an OR operation on the reset signal and the output of the comparator 8. The comparator 8 detects a voltage between the source and the drain of the charge control FET 103. If the voltage between the source and the drain is higher than a threshold value, the comparator 8 outputs a high-level signal. If the voltage between the source and the drain is lower than the threshold value, the comparator 8 outputs a low-level signal. In this manner, the comparator 8 judges whether the charging voltage is higher than a predetermined level or not from the voltage between the source and the drain of the charge control FET 103, thereby resetting the flip-flop 5. When the flip-flop 5 is set and the discharge control FET 104 is OFF before charging, the comparator 8 also detects electrification from the voltage between the source and the drain of the charge control FET 103. If electrification is detected, the flip-flop 5 is reset, the output of the flip-flop 5 becomes "low", and the discharge control FET 104 is turned on.

When the set terminal 3 becomes "1", the flip-flop 5 outputs "1". When the output of the reset terminal 4 or the output of the comparator 8 becomes "1", the flip-flop 5 outputs "0". The output of the flip-flop 5 is supplied to the OR gate 7.

The OR gate 7 is supplied with the output of the over-discharge control circuit 101b as well as the output of the flip-flop 5. The OR gate 7 performs an OR operation on the output of the flip-flop 5 and the output of the over-discharge control circuit 101b.

The output of the OR gate 7 is supplied to the discharge control FET 104. The discharge control FET 104 is OFF when the output of the OR gate 7 is "1", and is ON when the output of the OR gate is "0". In other words, when the flip-flop 5 is set, the discharge control FET 104 becomes "1" and is turned off. When the flip-flop 5 is reset and outputs "0", the discharge control FET 104 is turned on or off depending on the output of the over-discharge control circuit 101b of the voltage monitor circuit 101.

FIGS. 5A to 5E illustrate an operation of a charge control circuit of the first embodiment of the present invention. FIG. 5A shows the voltage between a terminal 105 and a terminal 106. FIG. 5B shows a set signal inputted into the set terminal 3. FIG. 5C shows the output of the flip-flop 5. FIG. 5D shows the gate voltage of the discharge control FET 104. FIG. 5E shows a waveform chart of a reset signal inputted into the reset terminal 4.

At timing t1, a set signal "1" is supplied to the set terminal 3 as shown in FIG. 5B. The output of the flip-flop 5 is then set at "1" as shown in FIG. 5C, and the gate of the discharge control FET 104 becomes "1" as shown in FIG. 5D. While the gate is "1", the discharge control FET 104 is turned off, and the output voltage of the terminal 105 becomes 0 V as shown in FIG. 5A. Since the gate of the discharge control FET 104 is fixed at "1" regardless of the charge control signal supplied from the voltage monitor circuit 101, the

discharge control FET 104 is turned off regardless of the state of each of battery cells E1, E2, and E3.

At a timing t2, a reset signal "1" is supplied to the reset terminal 4 as shown in FIG. 5E. The output of the flip-flop 5 is then reset at "0" as shown in FIG. 5C. When the output of the flip-flop 5 is "0", the OR gate 7 directly outputs the output of the charge control circuit 101b of the voltage monitor circuit 101.

Accordingly, the discharge control FET 104 is switched depending on the output of the charge control circuit 101b of the voltage monitor circuit 101. When the battery cells E1, E2, and E3 are in an over-discharging state, the discharge control FET 104 is turned off.

The battery unit 1 is mounted on an electronic device 11, and supplies power to the electronic device 11. The electronic device comprises a DC-DC converter 12, a device main body 13, a voltage monitor circuit 14, a regulator 15, a main switch 16, and a reset switch 17.

The DC-DC converter 12 is connected to the power source terminal 105 of the battery unit 1, and converts the voltage supplied from the battery unit 1 to a desired voltage. The DC-DC converter 12 is also connected to the regulator 15, and converts the voltage supplied from the regulator 15 to a desired voltage.

The voltage converted by the DC-DC converter 12 is then supplied to the device main body 13 via the main switch 16. The main switch 16 is turned on to supply the voltage converted by the DC-DC converter 12 to the device main body 13. The main switch 16 is interlocked with the reset switch 17. When the main switch 16 is turned on, the reset switch 17 is also turned on.

When the reset switch 17 is turned on, a

monitoring voltage is applied to the reset terminal 4 of the battery unit 1. Thus, the reset terminal 4 becomes "1". When the reset terminal 4 becomes "1", the discharge control FET 104 is released from the OFF state, and the discharge control FET 104 is switched on and off depending on the monitoring result of the voltage monitor circuit 101. Before the electronic device 11 is shipped, the battery unit 1 has the battery cells E1, E2, and E3 all charged to a certain extent. A voltage is then applied to the set terminal 3, so that the set terminal 3 becomes "1". Thus, the output of the flip-flop 5 is fixed at "1", and the discharge control FET 104 is fixed in the OFF state. The battery unit 1 is then mounted on the electronic device 11.

With the electronic device 11, an instruction is provided to connect an AC adapter 18 and switch on the main switch 16 after undoing the package of the electronic device 11. After the main switch 16 is switched on, the reset switch 17 is switched on, and the reset terminal 4 becomes "1" due to the monitoring voltage outputted from a terminal 9. The discharge control FET 104 is thus switched on.

After being released from the OFF state, the discharge control FET 104 is switched on and off depending on the monitoring result of the voltage monitor circuit 101, i.e., the charging voltages of the respective battery cells E1, E2, and E3.

In this embodiment, the discharge control FET 104 is fixed in the OFF state at the time of shipping, so that the connection of the battery cells E1, E2, and E3 with the DC-DC converter 12 that consumes a large amount of power during a non-operation period can be certainly severed. Thus, the amount of discharge of the battery unit 1 during

the period between the shipping and the start of use can be restricted to a minimum amount. In this manner, even if the electronic device 11 is not used for a long period of time after the shipping, the
5 battery cells E1, E2, and E3 of the battery unit 1 do not over-discharge, and can be prevented from deteriorating.

The voltage monitor circuit 101 and the discharge control circuit 2 shown in FIGS. 3 and 4
10 can be respectively formed by one IC. In a case where the voltage monitor circuit 101 is formed by one IC, terminals for connections between the voltage monitor circuit 101 and the respective battery cells E1, E2, and E3, and a terminal for a
15 signal line with the discharge control circuit 2 are employed. If the discharge control circuit 2 is formed by one IC, terminals for connecting the discharge control circuit 2 and the FETs 103 and 104 are employed. Also, each IC is provided with
20 terminals for the battery cells, the FETs, a reset signal and a set signal shown in FIGS. 3 and 4. Although these terminals are not shown in the drawings, they should be apparent to those skilled in the art, and should be construed as being
25 included in the disclosure of the present invention.

The voltage monitor circuit 101 and the discharge control circuit 2 may also be formed by one IC. In such a case, the one IC is provided with terminals for connections with the respective
30 battery cells E1, E2, and E3, for connections with the FETs 103 and 104, and for signals such as a reset signal and a set signal. Although these terminals are not shown in the drawings, they should be apparent to those skilled in the art, and should
35 be construed as being included in the disclosure of the present invention.

The voltage monitor circuit 101 and the

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discharge control circuit 2 including the FETs 103 and 104 may also be formed by one IC. In such a case, the one IC is also provided with terminals for connections with the respective battery cells E1, E2, and E3, and for signals such as a reset signal and a set signal. Although these terminals are not shown in the drawing, they should be apparent to those skilled in the art, and should be construed as being included in the disclosure of the present invention.

Although the discharge control FET 104 of the battery unit 1 is released from the OFF state by switching on the main switch 16 of the electronic device 11 in the above embodiment, it is possible to release the discharge control FET 104 from the OFF state by connecting the AC adapter 18 to the electronic device 11.

FIG. 6 is a block diagram of a first modification of the first embodiment of the present invention. In this figure, the same components as in FIG. 3 are indicated by the same reference numerals.

This modification differs from the first embodiment of FIG. 3 in the electronic device. An electronic device 21 of this modification is not provided with the reset switch 17 of FIG. 3, and the output of the regulator 15 is connected not only to the DC-DC converter 12 but also to the reset terminal 4 of the battery unit 1.

In this modification, when the AC adapter 18 is connected to the electronic device 21, the output of the regulator 15 is connected not only to the DC-DC converter 12 but also to the reset terminal 4 of the battery unit 1. In other words, when the AC adapter 18 is connected to the electronic device 21, the reset terminal 4 of the battery unit 1 becomes "1".

When the reset terminal 4 becomes "1", the

discharge control FET 104 is released from the OFF state, and is switched on and off depending on monitoring results from the voltage monitor circuit 101.

5 Although the discharge control FET 104 is released from the OFF state by setting the reset terminal 4 at "1" in this modification, the discharge control FET 104 may be released from the OFF state by the voltage between the source and the
10 drain of the charge control FET 103.

FIG. 7 is a block diagram of a second modification of the first embodiment of the present invention. In this figure, the same components as in FIG. 3 are indicated by the same reference
15 numerals.

This modification differs from the first embodiment shown in FIG. 3 in the electronic device. An electronic device 31 of this modification is structurally the same as a general electronic device
20 which is driven by the AC adapter 18 or a battery. In other words, the electronic device 31 is not provided with the terminal connected to the reset terminal 4 of the battery unit 1.

In this modification, the AC adapter 18 is
25 connected to the electronic device 31, so that the output DC voltage of the AC adapter 18 is supplied to the regulator 15. The regulator 15 converts the output DC voltage of the AC adapter 18 to a desired voltage, and supplies the converted voltage to the
30 DC-DC converter 12. Here, the output voltage of the regulator 15 is supplied as a charging voltage to the terminal 105 of the battery unit 1.

The discharge control FET 104 is connected between the source and the drain of the charge
35 control FET 103 in such a manner that the anode of a diode D104 faces the terminal 105 while the cathode of the diode D104 faces the charge control FET 103.

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Accordingly, when a charging voltage is supplied from the regulator 15 to the terminal 105, the voltage between the charge control FET 103 and the discharge control FET 104 becomes higher, and a
5 voltage is applied in the direction opposite to the discharging direction.

The discharge control circuit 2 monitors the voltage between the source and the drain of the charge control FET 103 using the comparator 8 shown
10 in FIG. 4. The comparator 8 outputs "1" when the voltage between the source and the drain of the charge control FET 103 is opposite to the discharging direction, i.e., when the voltage is high on the side of the terminal 105 and low on the
15 side of the battery cells E1, E2, and E3. Since the output of the comparator 8 is connected to the reset terminal of the flip-flop 5, the flip-flop 5 is reset when the output of the comparator 8 becomes "1". Thus, the discharge control FET 104 is
20 released from the OFF state.

As described above, the battery unit 1 of this modification can be applied to the conventional electronic device 31 having no circuit for setting the reset terminal 4 at "1". Even if the electronic
25 device 31 is not used for a long period of time after the shipping, the battery cells E1, E2, and E3 of the battery unit 1 do not over-charge. Thus, the battery cells E1, E2, and E3 can be prevented from deteriorating.

30 In the first and second modifications, the voltage monitor circuit 101 and the discharge control circuit 2 shown in FIGS. 6 and 7 may be respectively formed by one IC, as in the case of the first embodiment shown in FIGS. 3 and 4. In a case
35 where the voltage monitor circuit 101 is formed by one IC, terminals for connections between the voltage monitor circuit 101 and the respective

battery cells E1, E2, and E3, and a terminal for a signal line with the discharge control circuit 2 are employed. In a case where the discharge control circuit 2 is formed by one IC, terminals for

5 connections between the discharge control circuit 2 and the FETs 103 and 104 are employed. Also, each IC may be provided with terminals for connections with the battery cells and the FETs, and terminals for reset and set signals. Although these terminals

10 are not shown in the drawings, they should be apparent to those skilled in the art, and should be construed as being included in the disclosure of the present invention.

The voltage monitor circuit 101 and the

15 discharge control circuit 2 shown in FIGS. 6 and 7 may also be formed by one IC. In such a case, the one IC is provided with terminals for connections with the respective battery cells E1, E2, and E3, and terminals for connections with the FETs 103 and

20 104. Also, the IC may be provided with terminals for connections with the battery cells and the FETs, and for reset and set signals. Although these terminals are not shown in the drawings, they should be apparent to those skilled in the art, and should

25 be construed as being included in the disclosure of the present invention.

The voltage monitor circuit 101 and the discharge control circuit 2 including the FETs 103 and 104 may also be formed by one IC. In such a

30 case, the one IC is provided with terminals for connections with the respective battery cells. The one IC may also be provided with terminals for the battery cells and reset and set signals. Although these terminals are not shown in the drawings, they

35 should be apparent to those skilled in the art, and should be construed as being included in the disclosure of the present invention.

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Although the discharge control circuit 2 of this embodiment resets the flip-flop 5 depending on the voltage of the reset terminal 4 or the voltage between the source and the drain of the charge control FET 103, it is also possible to set or reset the flip-flop 5 depending on a signal for controlling the charge control FET 103.

FIG. 8 is a block diagram of a battery unit of a second embodiment of the present invention. In this figure, the same components as in FIG. 4 are indicated by the same reference numerals.

A battery unit 41 of this embodiment is formed by adding an OR gate 42 and a NOR gate 43 to the battery unit 1 shown in FIG. 4. The OR gate 42 performs an OR operation on the output of the reset terminal 4, the output of the comparator 8, and a charge control signal for controlling the charge control FET 103. The NOR gate 43 performs a NOR operation on the input of the set terminal 3 and the charge control signal for the charge control FET 103.

In this embodiment, the voltage monitor circuit 101 detects overcharge in the battery cells E1, E2, and E3. When the charge control signal supplied to the gate of the charge control FET 103 is "1", the OR gate 42 outputs "1". The flip-flop 5 is then reset, so that the discharge control FET 104 is released from the OFF state. Accordingly, when there is overcharge in the battery cells E1, E2, and E3, the discharge control FET 104 is switched on by the flip-flop 5, so as not to prevent the battery cells E1, E2, and E3 from discharging.

When the charge control signal for controlling the charge control FET 103 and the set signal from the set terminal 3 are both "0", the NOR gate 43 outputs "1". In an overcharge state, the output of the flip-flop 5 is not set at "1" by the NOR gate 43. Accordingly, the charge control FET

104 is on, and does not prevent the battery cells E1, E2, and E3 from discharging.

In this embodiment, the charge control FET is never fixed in the OFF state when the battery
5 cells E1, E2, and E3 are overcharged.

As in the first embodiment, the voltage monitor circuit 101 and the discharge control circuit 2 shown in FIG. 8 may each be formed by one IC. In a case where the voltage monitor circuit 101
10 is formed by one IC, terminals for connections between the voltage monitor circuit and the respective battery cells E1, E2, and E3, and terminals for a signal line of the discharge control circuit 2 are employed. In a case where the
15 discharge control circuit 2 is formed by one IC, terminals for connections between the discharge control circuit 2 and the FETs 103 and 104 are employed. Each IC is also provided with terminals for connecting the IC to the battery cells and FETs,
20 and terminals for reset and set signals. Although these terminals are not shown in the drawings, they should be apparent to those skilled in the art, and should be construed as being included in the disclosure of the present invention.

The voltage monitor circuit 101 and the
25 discharge control circuit 2 shown in FIG. 8 may be formed by only one IC. In such a case, the IC is provided with terminals for connections between the IC and the respective battery cells E1, E2, and E3,
30 and terminals for connections between the IC and the FETs 103 and 104. The IC is also provided with terminals for connecting the IC to the battery cells and FETs, and terminals for reset and set signals. Although these terminals are not shown in the
35 accompanying drawings, they should be apparent to those skilled in the art, and should be construed as being included in the disclosure of the present

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invention.

The voltage monitor circuit 101 and the discharge control circuit 2 including the FETs 103 and 104 may also be formed by only one IC. In such a case, the IC is provided with terminals for connections between the IC and the respective battery cells E1, E2, and E3. The IC is also provided with terminals for battery cells and terminals for reset and set signals. Although these terminals are not shown in the accompanying drawings, they should be apparent to those skilled in the art, and should be construed as being included in the disclosure of the present invention.

Although an overcharge state of the battery cells E1, E2, and E3 is detected from the monitor result of the voltage monitor circuit 101 in this embodiment, the voltage of each of the battery cells E1, E2, and E3 may be detected so that the charge control FET 103 is fixed in an OFF state by a voltage smaller than the monitoring voltage.

FIG. 9 is a block diagram of a battery cell unit of a third embodiment of the present invention. In this figure, the same components as in FIG. 8 are indicated by the same reference numerals.

A battery unit 51 of this embodiment is formed by adding a voltage detector circuit 52 to the battery unit 4 shown in FIG. 8.

The voltage detector circuit 52 comprises reference voltage sources ea, eb, and ec, comparators 53, 54, and 55, a NAND gate 56, an inverter 57, and an OR gate 58.

The comparator 53 compares the battery cell E1 with the reference voltage source ea. If the voltage of the battery cell E1 is higher than the voltage of the reference voltage source ea, the comparator 53 outputs "1". If the voltage of the

battery cell E1 is lower than the voltage of the reference voltage source eb, the comparator 53 outputs "0". The comparator 54 compares the battery cell E2 with the reference voltage eb. If the

5 voltage of the battery cell E2 is higher than the voltage of the reference voltage source eb, the comparator 54 outputs "1". If the voltage of the battery cell E2 is lower than the voltage of the reference voltage source eb, the comparator 54

10 outputs "0". The comparator 54 compares the battery cell E3 with the reference voltage source ec. If the voltage of the battery cell E3 is higher than the voltage of the reference voltage source ec, the comparator 55 outputs "1". If the voltage of the battery cell E3 is lower than the voltage of the reference voltage source ec, the comparator 55

15 outputs "0". Here, the voltages generated by the reference voltage sources ea, eb, and ec are uniformly set at 0 V.

20 The outputs of the comparators 53 to 55 are supplied to the NAND gate 56. The NAND gate 56 performs a NAND operation on the outputs of the comparators 53 to 55. The output of the NAND gate 56 is supplied to the OR gate 58 via the inverter 57.

25 The NAND gate 56 and the inverter 57 constitute an AND gate. When all the outputs of the comparator 53 to 55 are "1", the AND gate outputs a high-level signal.

The output of the inverter 57 is supplied

30 to the OR gate 58. A discharge control signal for controlling the charge control FET 103 is supplied to the OR gate 58. The OR gate performs an OR operation on the output of the inverter 57 and the discharge control signals for controlling the charge

35 control FET 103. The output of the OR gate 58 is then supplied to the OR gate 42 of the discharge control circuit 2.

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In the above manner, when the battery cells E1, E2, and E3 are overcharged, the flip-flop 5 is automatically reset, thereby canceling the OFF state of the discharge control FET 104.

- 5 As in the first and second embodiments, the voltage monitor circuit 101 and the discharge control circuit 2 shown in FIG. 9 may each be formed by one IC. In a case where the voltage monitor circuit 101 is formed by one IC, terminals for
- 10 connections between the voltage monitor circuit 101 and the respective battery cells E1, E2, and E3, and a terminal for a signal line with the discharge control circuit 2 are employed. In a case where the discharge control circuit 2 is formed by one IC,
- 15 terminals for connections between the discharge control circuit 2 and the FETs 103 and 104 are employed. Each IC is also provided with terminals for connecting the IC to the battery cells and the FETs, and terminals for reset and set signals.
- 20 Although these terminals are not shown in the accompanying drawings, they should be apparent to those skilled in the art, and should be construed as being included in the disclosure of the present invention.
- 25 The voltage monitor circuit 101 and the discharge control circuit 2 shown in FIG. 9 may be formed by only one IC. In such a case, the IC is provided with terminals for connections between the IC and the respective battery cells E1, E2, and E3,
- 30 and terminals for connections with the FETs 103 and 104. Also, the IC is provided with terminals for connecting the IC to the battery cells and the FETs, and terminals for reset and set signals. Although these terminals are not shown in the accompanying
- 35 drawings, they should be apparent to those skilled in the art, and should be construed as being included in the disclosure of the present invention.

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The voltage monitor circuit 101 and the discharge control circuit 2 including the voltage detector circuit 52 may be formed by only one IC. In such a case, the IC is provided with terminals for connections between the IC and the respective battery cells E1, E2, and E3, and terminals for connections with the FETs 103 and 104. Also, the IC is provided with terminals for connecting the IC to the battery cells and the FETs, and terminals for reset and set signals. Although these terminals are not shown in the accompanying drawings, they should be apparent to those skilled in the art, and should be construed as being included in the disclosure of the present invention.

The voltage monitor circuit 101, the discharge control circuit 2, and the voltage detector circuit 52, including the FETs 103 and 104, may be formed by only one IC. In such a case, the IC is provided with terminals for connections between the IC and the respective battery cells E1, E2, and E3. Also, the IC is provided with terminals for the battery cells, and reset and set signals. Although these terminals are not shown in the accompanying drawings, they should be apparent to those skilled in the art, and should be construed as being included in the disclosure of the present invention.

In the first to third embodiments, the flip-flop 5 is set at "1", so that the gate voltage of the discharge control FET 104 is set at "1". The discharge control FET 104 is thus fixed in the OFF state. However, the discharge control signal may be fixed at "1" by switching the reference voltage for detecting over-discharge in the battery cells E1, E2, and E3, thereby fixing the discharge control FET 104 in the OFF state.

FIG. 10 is a block diagram of a battery

unit of a fourth embodiment of the present invention. In this figure, the same components as in FIG. 2 are indicated by the same reference numerals.

A battery unit 61 of this embodiment is
5 provided with a discharge control circuit 62. The discharge control circuit 62 comprises reference voltage sources e11, e12, and e13, switches 63, 64, and 65, and a flip-flop 66.

The flip-flop 66 is connected to a set
10 terminal 67 and a reset terminal 68. When the set terminal 67 becomes "1", the flip-flop 66 outputs "1". When the reset terminal 68 becomes "1", the flip-flop 66 outputs "0". The output of the flip-flop 66 is supplied as switch control signals for
15 the switches 63, 64, and 65.

The switch 63 switches a reference voltage supplied to the comparator 11 to the reference voltage source e2a or e11 for detecting an over-discharge state, depending on the output of the
20 flip-flop 66. The switch 64 switches the reference voltage supplied to the comparator 111 to the reference voltage source e2b or e12 for detecting an over-discharge state, depending on the output of the flip-flop 66. The switch 65 switches the reference
25 voltage supplied to the comparator 111 to the reference voltage source e2c or e13 for detecting an over-discharge state, depending on the output of the flip-flop 66. Here, the reference voltage sources e11, e12, and e13 are sufficiently smaller than the
30 reference voltage sources e2a, e2b, and e2c, so that the output of the comparator 111 becomes "1" when the reference voltage sources e11, e12, and e13 are selected.

The switches 63, 64, and 65 select the
35 reference voltage e2a, e2b, and e2c when the output of the flip-flop 66 is "0". The switches 63, 64, and 65 select the reference voltage sources e11, e12,

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and e13 when the output of the flip-flop 66 is "1".

When the set terminal 67 and the output of the flip-flop 66 are both "1", the switches 63, 64, and 65 select the reference voltage sources e11, e12, and e13. Since the selected reference voltage sources e11, e12, and e13 are sufficiently smaller than the reference voltage sources e2a, e2b, and e2c, the outputs of the comparators 111, 112, and 113 become "1".

When the outputs of the comparators 111, 112, and 113 become "1", the OR gate 114 outputs "1". The output of the OR gate 114 is then supplied to the gate of the discharge control FET 104. Since the output of the OR gate 114 is "1", the discharge control FET 104 is switched off.

When the reset terminal 68 becomes "1" and the output of the flip-flop 66 becomes "0", the switches 63, 64, and 65 select the reference voltage sources e2a, e2b, and e2c. If the battery cells E1, E2, and E3 are in an over-discharge state here, the outputs of the comparators 111, 112, and 113 become "1" to switch off the discharge control FET 104. If the battery cells E1, E2, and E3 are not in an over-discharge state here, the outputs of the comparators 111, 112, and 113 become "0" to switch on the discharge control FET 104. A normal over-discharge control operation is thus started.

In this embodiment, the discharge control circuit 62 may be formed by one IC. In such a case, terminal for connections between the battery cells E1, E2, and E3, and terminals for connections with the reference voltage sources e2a, e2b, and e2c are employed. Also, the IC is provided with terminals for connections with the comparators 111, 112, and 113. Although these terminals are not shown in the accompanying drawings, they should be apparent to those skilled in the art, and should be construed as

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One IC may include the comparators 111, 112, 113, 121, 122, and 123, the reference voltage sources e1a, e1b, e1c, e2a, e2b, and e2c, and the OR circuit 114, all shown in FIG. 10. In such a case, the IC is provided with terminals for connections with other components.

In the above embodiments, the battery cells in the battery unit are Li⁺ battery cells. However, the type of battery cells in the present 20 invention is not limited to Li⁺ ion battery cells.

FIG. 12 is a perspective view of the battery unit 1 of FIG. 11 without the cover 302. In this figure, a substrate 303 is provided with an IC chip 304 and the fuse 306, and is connected to a wiring pattern (not shown). The voltage monitor circuit 101 is disposed inside the IC chip 304, for instance.

FIG. 13 is a perspective view of the

battery unit 1 of FIG. 11 without the substrate 303. In this figure, battery cells 307 are equivalent to the battery cells E1 to E3. It should be understood here that the shape of the battery unit is not

- 5 limited to the shape shown in FIGS. 11 to 13, but the battery unit may have any other suitable shape.

The present invention is not limited to the specifically disclosed embodiments, but variations and modifications may be made without departing from the scope of the present invention.

The present application is based on Japanese priority application No. 11-74479, filed on March 18, 1999, the entire contents of which are hereby incorporated for reference.

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WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

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1. A protection method of protecting battery cells from over-discharging, comprising the steps of:

10 monitoring the voltage of each of the battery cells;

controlling a discharge control switch connected between a load and the battery cells in accordance with the voltage of each of the battery cells; and

15 maintaining the discharge control switch in a forced OFF state in accordance with a forced off signal supplied from outside.

20

2. The protection method as claimed in claim 1, further comprising the step of releasing the discharge control switch from the forced OFF state in accordance with a release signal supplied from outside.

25

30

3. The protection method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the discharge control switch is released from the forced OFF state when the battery cells are being charged.

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4. The protection method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the discharge control switch is released from the forced OFF state when any of the battery cells is in an overcharged state.

5

5. The protection method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the discharge control switch is released from the forced OFF state when the voltage of any of the battery cells reaches a predetermined voltage value.

15

6. A control circuit which is controlled in accordance with the voltage of each of battery cells by a monitor circuit monitoring over-discharge of the battery cells, and which controls a discharge control switch disposed between a load and the battery cells,

said control circuit comprising a forced OFF unit which forces the discharge control switch into a forced OFF state, regardless of a monitoring result of the monitor circuit.

30

7. A control circuit which is controlled in accordance with the voltage of each of battery cells by a monitor circuit monitoring over-discharge of the battery cells, and which controls a discharge control switch disposed between a load and the battery cells,

said control circuit comprising a forced OFF unit which forces the discharge control switch into a forced OFF state in accordance with a forced OFF signal supplied from outside.

5

8. The control circuit as claimed in claim 7, further comprising a release unit which releases the discharge control switch from the forced OFF state in accordance with a release signal supplied from outside.

15

9. The control circuit as claimed in claim 6, further comprising:
20 a detecting unit which detects whether the battery cells are being charged or not; and
a release unit which releases the discharge control switch from the forced OFF state when the battery cells are being charged.

25

10. The control circuit as claimed in claim 7, further comprising:
30 a detecting unit which detects whether the battery cells are being charged or not; and
a release unit which releases the discharge control switch from the forced OFF state when the battery cells are being charged.

35

11. The control circuit as claimed in claim 9, wherein the discharge control switch is controlled by the monitor circuit when released from the forced OFF state by the release unit.

5

12. The control circuit as claimed in claim 10, wherein the discharge control switch is controlled by the monitor circuit when released from the forced OFF state by the release unit.

15

13. The control circuit as claimed in claim 6, further comprising:

a detecting unit which detects whether the battery cells are in an overcharged state or not; and

a release unit which releases the discharge control switch from the forced OFF state when any of the battery cells is in an overcharged state.

25

14. The control circuit as claimed in claim 7, further comprising:

a detecting unit which detects whether the battery cells are in an overcharged state or not; and

a release unit which releases the discharge control switch from the forced OFF state when any of the battery cells is in an overcharged

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state.

5

15. The control circuit as claimed in claim 13, wherein the discharge control switch is controlled by the monitor circuit when released from the forced OFF state by the release unit.

10

16. The control circuit as claimed in claim 14, wherein the discharge control switch is controlled by the monitor circuit when released from the forced OFF state by the release unit.

20

17. The control circuit as claimed in claim 6, further comprising a release unit which releases the discharge control switch from the forced OFF state when the voltage of any of the battery cells reaches a predetermined voltage value.

30

18. The control circuit as claimed in claim 7, further comprising a release unit which releases the discharge control switch from the forced OFF state when the voltage of any of the battery cells reaches a predetermined voltage value.

19. The control circuit as claimed in claim 17, wherein the predetermined voltage value can be set at a desired value.

5

20. The control circuit as claimed in claim 18, wherein the predetermined voltage value can be set at a desired value.

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21. A battery unit for supplying power to a load, comprising:
battery cells;
a monitor circuit which monitors an over-discharged state of the battery cells;
a discharge control switch which is controlled by the monitor circuit, and is disposed between the load and the battery cells; and
a forced OFF unit which forces the discharge control switch into a forced OFF state, regardless of a monitoring result of the monitor circuit.

30

22. A battery unit for supplying power to a load, comprising:
battery cells;
a monitor circuit which monitors an over-discharged state of the battery cells;
a discharge control switch which is controlled by the monitor circuit, and is disposed

between the load and the battery cells; and

- 5 a forced OFF state unit which forces the discharge control switch into a forced OFF state in accordance with a forced OFF signal supplied from outside the battery unit.

- 10 23. The battery unit as claimed in claim 22, further comprising a release unit which releases the discharge control switch from the forced OFF state in accordance with a release signal supplied from outside the battery unit.

15

- 20 24. The battery unit as claimed in claim 21, further comprising:
a detecting unit which detects whether the battery cells are being charged or not; and
a release unit which releases the discharge control switch from the forced OFF state
25 when the battery cells are being charged.

- 30 25. The battery unit as claimed in claim 22, further comprising:
a detecting unit which detects whether the battery cells are being charged or not; and
a release unit which releases the
35 discharge control switch from the forced OFF state when the battery cells are being charged.

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26. The battery unit as claimed in claim 24, wherein the discharge control unit is controlled by the monitor circuit when released from the forced OFF state by the release unit.

5

27. The battery unit as claimed in claim 25, wherein the discharge control unit is controlled by the monitor circuit when released from the forced OFF state by the release unit.

15

28. The battery unit as claimed in claim 21, further comprising:

a detecting unit which detects whether the battery cells are in an over-discharged state when the discharge control switch is held in the forced OFF state by the forced OFF unit; and

a release unit which releases the discharge control switch from the forced OFF state when the battery cells are in an overcharged state.

29. The battery unit as claimed in claim 22, further comprising:

a detecting unit which detects whether the battery cells are in an overcharged state when the discharge control switch is held in the forced OFF state by the forced OFF unit; and

a release unit which releases the discharge control switch from the forced OFF state

when the battery cells are in an overcharged state.

5

30. The battery unit as claimed in claim 28, wherein the discharge control switch is controlled by the monitor circuit when released from the forced OFF state by the release unit.

10

31. The battery unit as claimed in claim 29, wherein the discharge control switch is controlled by the monitor circuit when released from the forced OFF state by the release unit.

20

32. The battery unit as claimed in claim 21, further comprising a release unit which releases the discharge control switch from the forced OFF state when the voltage of any of the battery cells reaches a predetermined voltage value.

30

33. The battery unit as claimed in claim 22, further comprising a release unit which releases the discharge control switch from the forced OFF state when the voltage of any of the battery cells reaches a predetermined voltage value.

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34. The battery unit as claimed in claim 32, wherein the predetermined voltage value can be set at a desired value.

5

35. The battery unit as claimed in claim 33, wherein the predetermined voltage value can be set at a desired value.

36. A control circuit in a protection circuit for a device having a discharge control switch which controls discharge and is situated between a load and battery cells supplying power to the load,

said control circuit comprising:

a monitor circuit which judges whether any of the battery cells is in an over-discharged state or not from voltages inputted from the battery cells, and which switches off the discharge control switch when any of the battery cells is in an over-discharged state; and

a forced OFF unit which forces the discharge control switch into a forced OFF state in accordance with a signal supplied from outside.

30

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A protection method for preventing battery cells from over-discharging and being overcharged, a control circuit, and a battery unit are provided.

- 5 In the protection method, when a set signal "1" is supplied to a set terminal, a flip-flop outputs "1". The gate of a discharge control FET then becomes "1", so that the discharge control FET is OFF regardless of a discharge control signal supplied from a
- 10 voltage monitor circuit. When a reset signal "1" is supplied to a reset terminal, the flip-flop outputs "0". The discharge control FET is then switched on and off in accordance with the output of a discharge control circuit of the voltage monitor circuit. In
- 15 this manner, battery cells connected to an electronic device do not over-discharge, even when they are left unused for a long period of time. Thus, the battery unit can be prevented from deteriorating and shortening the life thereof.

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FIG. 1 PRIOR ART

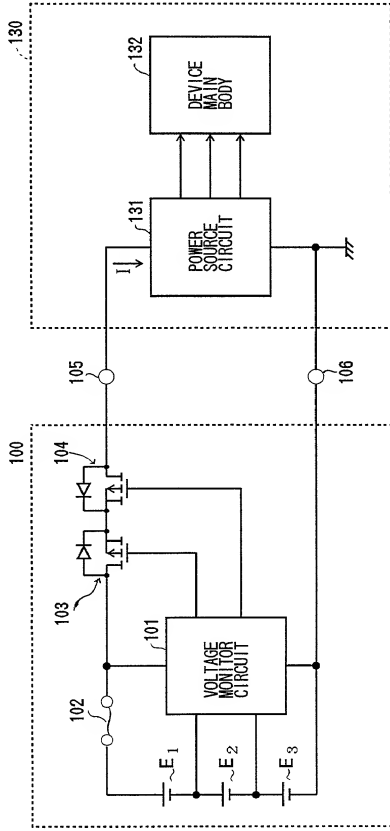


FIG. 2 PRIOR ART

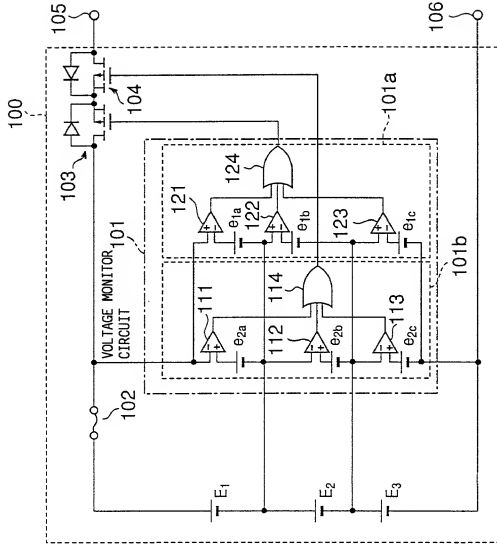


FIG. 3

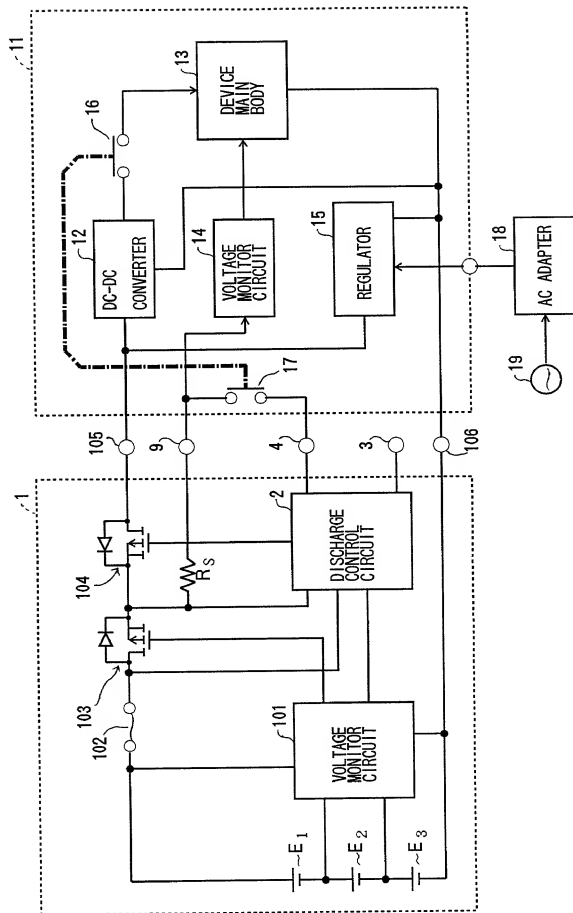


FIG. 4

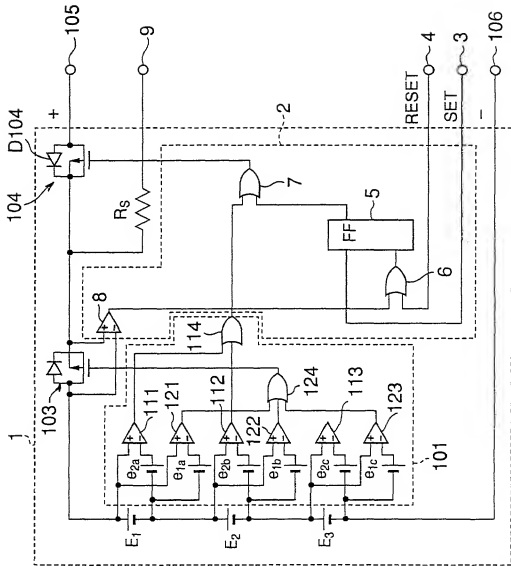


FIG. 5A

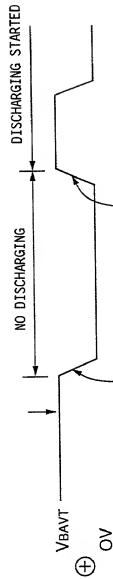


FIG. 5B



FIG. 5C



FIG. 5D



FIG. 5E



FIG. 6

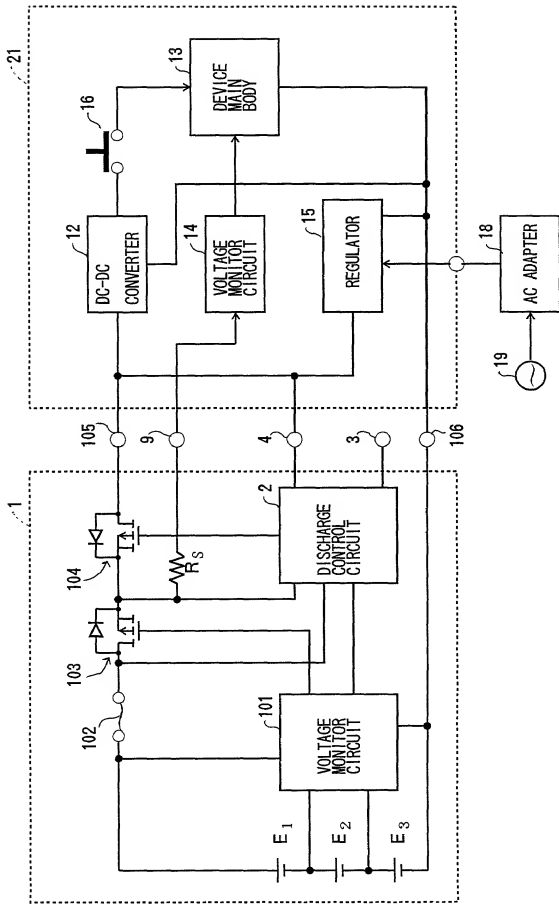


FIG. 7

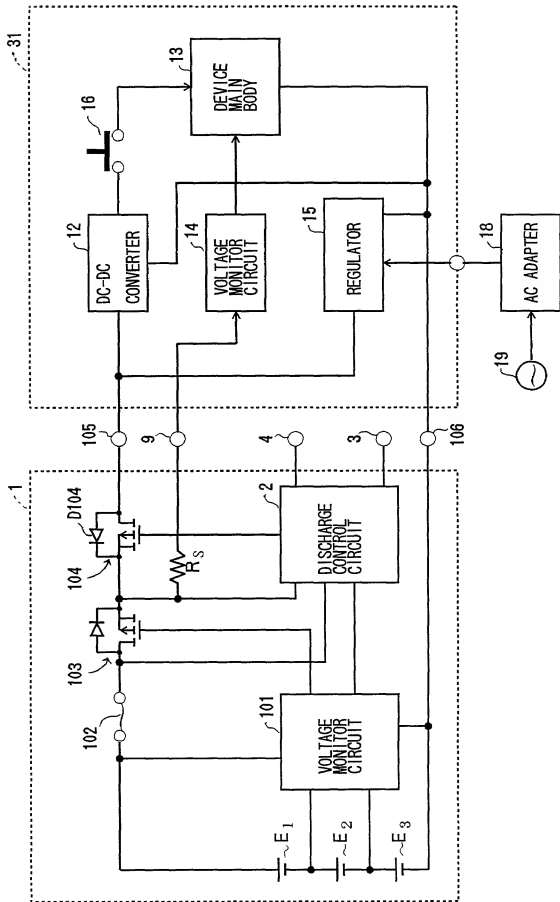


FIG. 8

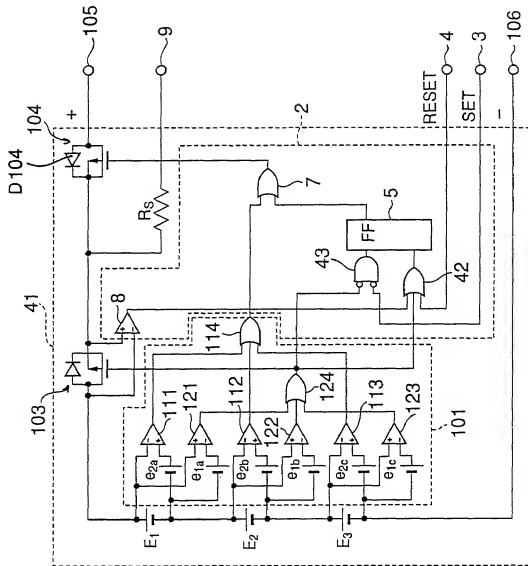


FIG. 9

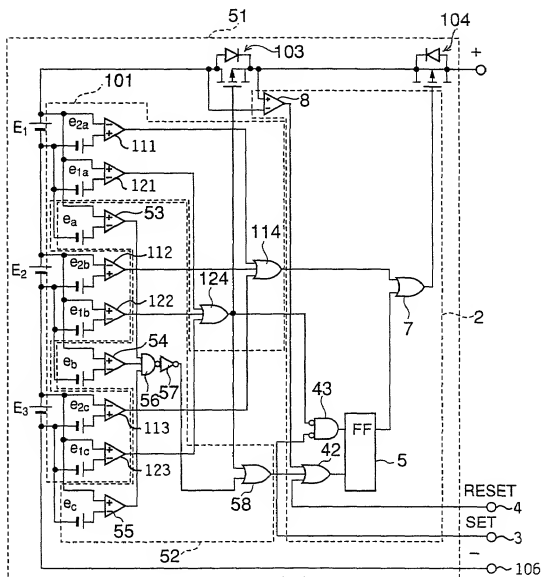


FIG. 10

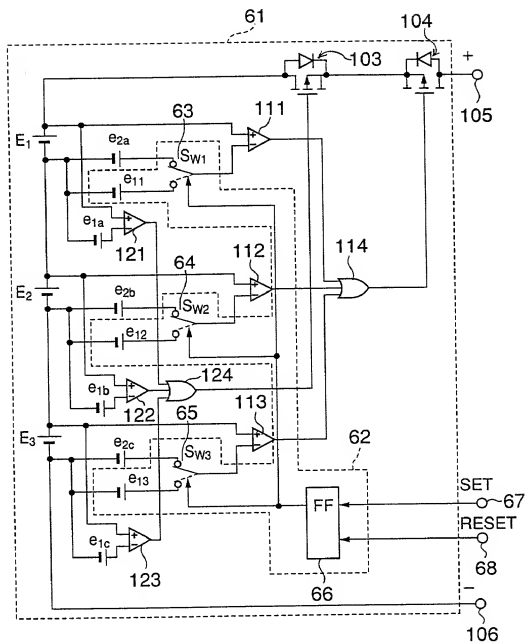


FIG. 11

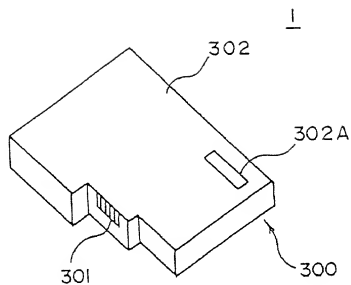


FIG. 12

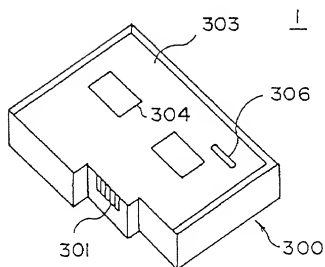
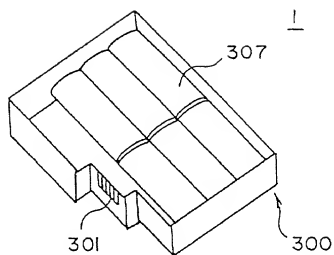


FIG. 13



Declaration and Power of Attorney For Patent Application

特許出願宣言書及び委任状

Japanese Language Declaration

日本語宣言書

下記の氏名の発明者として、私は以下の通り宣言します。

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that:

私の住所、私書箱、国籍は下記の私の氏名の後に記載された通りです。

My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated next to my name.

下記の名称の発明に関して請求範囲に記載され、特許出願している発明内容について、私が最初かつ唯一の発明者（下記の氏名が一つの場合）もしくは最初かつ共同発明者であると（下記の名称が複数の場合）信じています。

I believe I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled

PROTECTION METHOD, CONTROL CIRCUIT,

AND BATTERY UNIT

上記発明の明細書（下記の欄でx印がついていない場合は、本書に添付）は、

the specification of which is attached hereto unless the following box is checked:

☐ 月 日に提出され、米国出願番号または特許協定条約国際出願番号を _____ とし、
（該当する場合） _____ に訂正されました。

☐ was filed on _____
as United States Application Number or
PCT International Application Number
_____ and was amended on
_____ (if applicable).

私は、特許請求範囲を含む上記訂正後の明細書を検討し、内容を理解していることをここに表明します。

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment referred to above.

私は、連邦規則法典第37編第1条56項に定義されるとおり、特許資格の有無について重要な情報を開示する義務があることを認めます。

I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to patentability as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 1.56.

Under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Japanese Language Declaration

(日本語宣言書)

私は、米国法典第35編119条(a)-(d)項又は365条(b)項に基づき下記の、米 国以外の国の少なくとも一ヶ国を指定している特許協力条約365(a)項に基づく国際出願、又は外国での特許出願もしくは発明者証の出願についての外国優先権をここに主張するとともに、優先権を主張している、本出願の前に出願された特許または発明者証の外国出願を以下に、枠内をマークすること、示しています。

Prior Foreign Application(s)

外国での先行出願
 Pat. Appln. No. 11-074479

(Number)
 (番号)

Japan

(Country)
 (国名)

18/March/1999

(Day/Month/Year Filed)
 (出願年月日)

(Number)
 (番号)

(Country)
 (国名)

(Day/Month/Year Filed)
 (出願年月日)

Priority Not Claimed

優先権主張なし

□

□

私は、第35編米国法典119条(e)項に基づいて下記の米
 国特許出願規定に記載された権利をここに主張いたします。

(Application No.)
 (出願番号)

(Filing Date)
 (出願日)

(Application No.)
 (出願番号)

(Filing Date)
 (出願日)

私は、下記の米国法典第35編120条に基づいて下記の米
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 協力条約365条(c)に基づき権利をここに主張します。また、
 本出願の各請求範囲の内容が米国法典第35編112条
 第1項又は特許協力条約で規定された方法で先行する米
 国特許出願に開示されていない限り、その先行米
 国出願書提出日以降で本出願書の日本国内または特許協
 力条約国際提出日まで
 の期間に入手された、連邦規則典第37編1条56項
 で定義された特許資格の有無に関する重要な情報について開
 示義務があることを認識しています。

(Application No.)
 (出願番号)

(Filing Date)
 (出願日)

(Status: Patented, Pending, Abandoned)
 (現況: 特許可済、係属中、放棄済)

(Application No.)
 (出願番号)

(Filing Date)
 (出願日)

(Status: Patented, Pending, Abandoned)
 (現況: 特許可済、係属中、放棄済)

私は、私自身の知識に基づいて本宣言書で私が行なう表
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I hereby claim foreign priority under Title 35, United States Code, Section 119 (a)-(d) or 365(b) of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate, or 365(a) of any PCT International application which designated at least one country other than the United States, listed below and have also identified below, by checking the box, any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate, or PCT International application having a filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed.

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code, Section 119(b) of any United States provisional application(s) listed below.

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code, Section 120 of any United States application(s), or 365(c) of any PCT International application designating the United States, listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States or PCT International application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of Title 35, United States Code Section 112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to patentability as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 1.56 which became available between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT International filing date of application.

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

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Japanese Language Declaration

(日本語宣言書)

委任状: 私は下記の発明者として、本出願に関する一切の手続きを特許庁事務局に対して遂行する弁護士または代理人として、下記の者を指名いたします。(弁護士、または代理人の氏名及び登録番号を明記のこと)

POWER OF ATTORNEY: As a named inventor, I hereby appoint the following attorney(s) and/or agent(s) to prosecute this application and transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith (list name and registration number)

David T. Nikaide, Reg. No. 22,663; Charles M. Marmelstein, Reg. No. 25,895; George E. Oram, Jr., Reg. No. 27,931; Robert B. Murray, Reg. No. 22,980; E. Marcie Emas, Reg. No. 32,131; Douglas H. Goldhust, Reg. No. 33,125

送付先

Send Correspondence to:
NIKAIDO, MARMELESTEIN, MURRAY & ORAM LLP
Metropolitan Square - 655 Fifteenth Street, N.W.,
Suite 330 - G Street Lobby
Washington, D.C. 20005-5701
(202) 638-5000 Fax: (202) 638-4810

直接電話連絡先: (名前及び電話番号)

Direct Telephone Calls to: (name and telephone number)

唯一または第一発明者名

Full name of sole or first inventor
Mitsuo Saeki

発明者の署名

日付

Inventor's signature

Date

Mitsuo Saeki February 18, 2000

住所

Residence
Kawasaki-shi, Kanagawa, Japan

国籍

Citizenship
Japan

私書箱

Post Office Address
c/o FUJITSU LIMITED,

1-1, Kamikodanaka 4-chome, Nakahara-ku,
Kawasaki-shi, Kanagawa, 211-8588 Japan

第二共同発明者

Full name of second joint inventor, if any
Masafumi Okumura

第二共同発明者

日付

Second inventor's signature

Date

Masafumi Okumura February 18, 2000

住所

Residence
Kawasaki-shi, Kanagawa, Japan

国籍

Citizenship
Japan

私書箱

Post Office Address
c/o FUJITSU LIMITED,

1-1, Kamikodanaka 4-chome, Nakahara-ku,
Kawasaki-shi, Kanagawa, 211-8588 Japan

(第三以降の共同発明者についても同様に記載し、署名をすること)

(Supply similar information and signature for third and subsequent joint inventors.)

第三共同発明者名		Full name of third joint inventor, if any	
		Shigeo Tanaka	
第三共同発明者の署名	日付	Third inventor's signature	Date
		Shigeo Tanaka	February 18, 2000
住所	Residence		
	Kawasaki-shi, Kanagawa, Japan		
国籍	Citizenship		
	Japan		
私書箱	Post Office Address		
	c/o FUJITSU LIMITED, 1-1, Kamikodanaka 4-chome, Nakahara-ku, Kawasaki-shi, Kanagawa, 211-8588 Japan		
第四共同発明者名		Full name of fourth joint inventor, if any	
		Hidekiyo Ozawa	
第四共同発明者の署名	日付	Fourth inventor's signature	Date
		Hidekiyo Ozawa	February 18, 2000
住所	Residence		
	Kawasaki-shi, Kanagawa, Japan		
国籍	Citizenship		
	Japan		
私書箱	Post Office Address		
	c/o FUJITSU LIMITED, 1-1, Kamikodanaka 4-chome, Nakahara-ku, Kawasaki-shi, Kanagawa, 211-8588 Japan		
第五共同発明者名		Full name of fifth joint inventor, if any	
第五共同発明者の署名	日付	Fifth inventor's signature	Date
住所	Residence		
国籍	Citizenship		
私書箱	Post Office Address		
第六共同発明者名		Full name of sixth joint inventor, if any	
第六共同発明者の署名	日付	Sixth inventor's signature	Date
住所	Residence		
国籍	Citizenship		
私書箱	Post Office Address		

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re the application of:

Mitsuo SAEKI et al

Serial Number: New Application

Group Art Unit:

Filed: March 17, 2000

Examiner:

For: PROTECTION METHOD, CONTROL CIRCUIT, AND BATTERY UNIT

NOTIFICATION OF CHANGE OF NAME AND ADDRESS

Assistant Commissioner for Patents

Washington, D.C. 20231

March 17, 2000

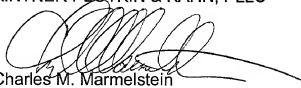
Sir:

Kindly change the correspondence name and address for the above-identified application to the following:

ARENT FOX KINTNER PLOTKIN & KAHN, PLLC
1050 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 600
Washington, DC 20036-5339
Telephone: (202) 857-6000
Telefax: (202) 638-4810

Should any fees be due with respect to this paper, please charge Counsel's Deposit Account No. 01-2300.

Respectfully submitted,
ARENT FOX KINTNER PLOTKIN & KAHN, PLLC


Charles M. Marmelstein
Attorney for Applicants
Reg. No. 27,931

Atty. Docket No. P353-9049
1050 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Suite 600
Washington, DC 20036-5339
Tel: (202) 857-6008

CMM:lad